

that impinge upon the subjects relating to PESA. Many hundreds of State laws of the PESA states have been thoroughly examined, and amendments forwarded to the States. State Governments are carrying out the exercise in consultation with their respective Departments of Law and the line departments. There is an urgent need to expedite the process of changing these laws by the State.

Regarding the recommendations submitted by the Scheduled Tribes commission to the Union Government on 16th July, 2004 with regard to Dantewara District, Bastar of Chhattisgarh and all the other Tribal Districts of Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has communicated that the recommendations submitted by the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission to Union Government have been forwarded to all concerned Department/Ministries/States for follow up action.

(c) and (d) As there is already a Standing Committee and a Consultative Committee attached to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, as also similar arrangements with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, it is not present proposed to constitute any other Parliamentary Committee.

Women representation and empowerment in Panchayats

3106. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that of the total 26 lakh elected Panchayat representatives, more than 10 lakh are women;

(b) if so, whether it means that more than 42 percent of women are elected in Panchayats;

(c) if so, whether his Ministry found any change in the profile of rural leadership in rural areas, particularly women;

(d) whether it has come to the notice of his Ministry that though there are elected women in Panchayats, still they are discriminated or dominated by the male members of villages; and

(e) if so, what his Ministry is doing to really empower women in Panchayats?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR):

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There are 27,82,293 elected representatives in Panchayats out of which 10,42,282 are women which constitute to 37.46%. Article 243D of the Constitution provides that not less than one-third of the total number of seats in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women including Chairpersons in every Panchayats and such seat may be allotted by rotation to different Constituencies/Panchayats at each level. The percentage of women representatives in Panchayats as on 01.11.2006 is as under:—

Panchayat Level	Number	Elected Representatives	Elected Women Representatives	Women %
District Panchayats	539	15,231	5,817	38.2
Intermediate Panchayats	6,103	1,56,150	58,418	37.4
Village Panchayats	2,33,886	26,10,912	9,78,047	37.5
TOTAL	2,40,528	27,82,293	10,42,282	37.46

(c) It is our considered assessment that women representatives in Panchayats have become more effective and assertive and there is marked improvement in their functioning. To further facilitate the process of women's empowerment in the Panchayats, which is, of course, related to greater empowerment of the Panchayats themselves, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is implementing a scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana. One of the components of this scheme is 'Training of Capacity Building' under which funds are provided to State Governments for training of elected representatives including women representatives and officials of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The training is imparted to the elected representatives by the State Governments through the State Institutes of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development and Extension Training Centres. Moreover, the Ministry has initiated the Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan. The Abhiyan has thus far been launched in eight States and it is intended to cover on an average one additional state a month.

(d) In undertaking such a massive political and social transformation in rural India, involving lakhs of women who have hitherto not been in public life, and in overcoming centuries-old social customs and traditions that have hitherto hindered the empowerment of women, it is inevitable that there would be teething problems in inducting women into the process in

some places and at some time. To gain a scientific understanding of the progress made and the challenges still to be overcome, the Ministry has commissioned Prof. Nirja Gopal Jayal of the Jawaharlal Nehru University to put together a team to survey and then undertake field research on the subject. Their Report is expected by the end of next year.

(e) In addition to the training and capacity building of the elected women representatives, the Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan—a movement to strengthen the elected women of the PRIs—has been initiated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj under the aegis of the "Chalo Gaon Ki Ore" rubric of the National Commission for Women. A core group comprising selected EWRs, activists, academics etc. is nominated by the State Government/ Government of India to draft and facilitate a draft women's charter for the EWRs of the state stating thereon their particular issues. Subsequently, all women Zila Pramukhs, all women Pradhans and selected women Sarpanchs from each district of the state, as well as Core Group members and some eminent personalities are invited to a said two day conference of panchayat women. A women's charter comprising all the major points distilled from the discussions with the women representatives of the PRIs is then finalized.

The Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan has been conceptualized to initiate awareness about the gender issues in governance and to facilitate Elected Women Representatives in performing their mandate to the best of their abilities. Most EWRs see themselves as isolated and unorganized, functioning without the support of a structure and have spoken of the need to form into groups or associations so as to be part of a forum that addresses their special needs in largely male-dominated social political milieu. So far, conferences of elected women representatives, activists, NGOs, eminent personalities have been held as under:—

1. Udaipur (Rajasthan)- 23rd & 24th April, 2006.
2. Patiala (Punjab)-17th & 18th July, 2006.
3. Bangalore (Karnataka) 5th September, 2006
4. Dehradun (Uttaranchal) on 24th September, 2006
5. Imphal (Manipur)- 4th & 5th October, 2006
6. Panaji (Goa)-19th October, 2006.
7. Sikkim (Gangtok)-26th & 27th April, 2007

Besides the State-level Conferences, a one-day divisional-level conference was also held on 29th November 2006 at Jaipur in Rajasthan. Such conference are planned for other states as well.